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Title: Re-Constructing the Ethic Dimensions of Landscape: the Educational Action of the Eco-museums in Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy)

Keywords: Ethics, Eco-museum, Landscape Education, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Territorial Citizenship

Abstract

In Italy, eco-museums have played and play a major role in recovering memories, traditions, practices and knowledge related to the landscape in specific territories with the aim of making communities aware of the identity of their local landscape (Maggi, Murtas, 2004; Maggi, Falletti, 2001). These strategies involve the conservation and promotion of the landscape as part of participatory and resilient policies, fostering a sustainable future for the communities. This educative action aims at applying the European Landscape Convention (ELC) underpinning an active role of the communities in constructing a collective perception of landscape (Council of Europe, 2000). In relation to the decision-making processes, the ELC offers an interpretation of landscape, which recalls its democratic meaning. In fact the Convention not only implies duties and responsibilities for the entire population, but also delivers the possibility to define landscape values (Castiglioni, 2011), underlining the role of citizens/inhabitants in political terms and the right to landscape (Jones, 2016).

Eco-museum educational actions are strictly related to participatory activities relying on active citizen participation as a pre-condition to developing a sustainable governance of the territory, where the cultural, historical and ecological dimensions of landscape play a fundamental role. The collective production of knowledge toward landscape allows us to perceive the changing territorial dynamics in a more profound manner, rethinking the role of citizens in shaping landscape values and transformations (Magnaghi, 2011).

Within the context of Italy, the scarce attention given to landscape education in schools and university curricula has pushed eco-museums to focus on the landscape as a prime topic at the local and regional levels. In the case of the Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), the seven eco-museums have become the main counterparts of primary and secondary schools in developing activities of landscape education on the territory.

The research focuses on the ethic and political dimensions of eco-museum educational action in Friuli Venezia Giulia. In fact the activities of landscape education at the community level, accompanied by a broader activity of education and knowledge dissemination involving lower school levels, are part of a process which continuously redefines landscape values in the society. Eco-museum activities involve several community groups offering a mirror of the changing perceptions which characterize the relationship landscape-citizens and landscape-stakeholders/groups of interest at a critical moment for the territorial policies in Friuli Venezia Giulia (this period has been marked by the approval of a Regional Landscape Plan and by the redefinition of the regional administrative offices responsible for landscape conservation and management, in 2018).

The research analyzes the eco-museums educational activities, focusing on some key dimensions/abilities:

- the capacity of fostering the debate on landscape values;
- the ability of including different approaches/perceptions on local landscape (gender sensitiveness, plurality of visions on the same landscape coming from different social categories, age groups, migrants, etc.);
- the aptitude in understanding the various political meanings of landscape (and the drivers of such ideas) in relation to the ethical backgrounds of the stakeholders (ideological visions of landscape).

The research methodology is based on a mixed approach both in data collection (using mainly in-depth interviews and questionnaires) and analysis. In-depth interviews have been developed with the eco-museum directors and the members of technical and scientific committees, seen as key informants. The aim of this research activity consists in exploring landscape as a conceptual tool to develop practices of 'territorial citizenship' and understanding how the main statutory objectives of the various associations are actually pursued, both in terms of education-training and in terms of the cultural promotion of local areas and the protection of the natural environment. The interviews touched upon three thematic areas: the educational set-up of eco-museum activities; the capacity of such landscape education activities in triggering a more general redefinition of the relation citizen-territory, within the frame of 'democratic landscapes' (individual, collective, 'transferred', right-oriented approaches to landscape); the plural meaning of 'landscape values' (aesthetic, identity-related, action-oriented, political).

A questionnaire has been proposed to the eco-museum collaborators and to the participants involved in the educational activities. The aim of the survey is to understand how landscape values and local identities are understood by the various participants (with specific attention placed on their translation for young generations). The questionnaire includes evaluation tools identified to monitor the educational activities, offering instruments to reconsider and improve the entire eco-museum educational system. A specific part of the questionnaire is dedicated to community mapping processes: due to the capacity of engaging different categories of citizens (students, workers, etc.), participatory community mapping offers the opportunity of analysing the mechanisms of co-construction of places and local landscapes, the different sensitivity in identifying critical points and values in specific landscape areas and the processes of active citizenship in imagining future landscapes (Bianchetti, 2013; Clifford and Kings, 1996). Both the participatory landscape analysis and the exercise of active citizenship promoted by eco-museums underline the central role of landscape in redefining the ethical frame embedded in the citizens-territory relationship, in all its poly-semantic meanings (de Varine, 2011).

In face of the weakness of the public administration and political parties in promoting landscape as a key asset for the redefinition of local identities, the research shows the importance of eco-museum educational action in the re-appropriation of landscape by the different stakeholders present at the local level, enhancing a real application of the ELC principles. The study underlines the current contradictions and the future challenges in eco-museum educational action, which is still limited by their scarce capacity of determining public policies on landscape and by the difficulty in overcoming the local scale, where educational activities take place. Exploring eco-museum experiences, the research ends by questioning our own responsibility as researchers in facilitating a global re-definition of the ethical and political dimensions of landscape.

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Edit Submission

The submission has been updated. Below is the information submitted.

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